

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

Case File No.: AA-82821

AK-040-01-EA-029

Applicant: Anvik River Lodge
Cliff and Cheryl Hickson
P.O. Box 109
Anvik, AK 99558

Type of
Action: Special Recreation Permits (commercial tours)

Location: Guide Use Area 21
Anvik and Bonasila River Drainages

T. 31 N., R. 61 W., Section 2, Seward Meridian (Near Fish and Game Camp)

T. 28 S., R. 11 W., Section 11, Kateel River Meridian (Lat. 63° 04' 15.77" N.
Long 160° 43' 21" W.) (Near Confluence of Anvik/Swift River)

T. 28 N., R. 61 W., Section 33, Seward Meridian. (Lat. 68° 28' 61" N. Long 160°
36' 22" W) (Bonasila River)

Prepared By: Jake Schlapfer
Outdoor Recreation Planner

Preparing
Office: Bureau of Land Management
Anchorage Field Office
6881 Abbott Loop Road
Anchorage, Alaska 99507

Date: September 25, 2001

I. INTRODUCTION

A. Purpose and Need for the Proposed Action:

The Anchorage Field Office has received an application for commercial outfitted, non-guided hunting on BLM administered lands near Anvik, Alaska. This type of service is needed to meet the anticipated public demand for quality, non-guided services which provide safe access and facilities in remote and relatively inaccessible locations. This is the only lodge based outfitter in the Anvik/Bonasila river drainage that provides such opportunities.

B. Conformance With Land Use Plan:

This action is in conformance with the Southwest Management Framework Plan (MFP) dated November 1981, activity objectives Wildlife (WL-4), Recreation (R-3), and Minerals (M-2). These decisions do not directly address special use permitting, but recognize that hunting, fishing, and trapping are legitimate uses of public land.

C. Relationship to Statutes, Regulations, Policies, Plans or Other Environmental Analyses:

The applicants are not guides. They do not require a State of Alaska Guide-Outfitter license to guide in area 21. They will be required to obtain a commercial transporters license from the State of Alaska.

A BLM Special Recreation Permit (SRP) regulates commercial services on BLM administered land and related water pursuant to 43 CFR 8372 and Handbook H-8372-1. As the land is selected by the State of Alaska, a concurrence in accordance with Section 906(k) of the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act (ANILCA) is required.

The applicants are responsible for obtaining permission for use of the adjacent Native lands.

II. PROPOSED ACTION AND ALTERNATIVES

A. Proposed Action:

Cliff and Cheryl Hickson, owners of Anvik River Lodge, have requested authorization to conduct non-guided moose hunts on public lands within Guide Use Area 21. Specifically, they will outfit clients within the watersheds of the Anvik and Bonasila River systems. All hunters will be based from the private hunting lodge located on the main stem of the Anvik River T. 32 N., R. 61 W., Section 10, just below the confluence of the Yellow River. (See maps located in case file AA-82821.) From the lodge, hunters will be either boated to the two camps located on the Anvik River, or flown to the camp on the upper Bonasila. These three spike camps are all located on BLM administered lands. Each camp

will consist of a wall tent (10' x 12') with cooking supplies, cots, and general supplies. A single hole outhouse will be used for human waste.

Hunters will be dropped off only. They will be un-guided. They will be supplied a boat and motor. The majority of the use will be during the month of September.

The open season dates for moose may change, but has generally run through the month of September. They anticipate each camp having two to three hunters per season (year), for a maximum of nine hunters. There will be boat fuel storage at the spike camps. Five gallon plastic containers will be utilized. No containment dike should be necessary as the tanks are portable and will be stored 150 feet from the water source. All non-burnable garbage will be hauled out. Camps will be completely taken down by October 1 of each year.

B. No Action Alternative:

The No Action Alternative would be to continue present management and not authorize commercial use for non-guided outfitting on BLM administered lands in the Anvik and Bonasila River drainage.

III. AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT

A. Critical Elements:

It has been determined that the following Critical Elements of the human environment are either not present or would not be affected by the Proposed Action or the No Action Alternative:

- Air Quality
- Areas of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC)
- Cultural/Paleontological Resources
- Environmental Justice
- Farm Lands (prime or unique)
- Floodplains
- Invasive, Non-native Species
- Native American Religious Concerns
- Subsistence
- T&E Species
- Wastes (Hazardous/Solid)
- Water Quality (Surface/Ground)
- Wetlands/Riparian
- Wild and Scenic Rivers
- Wilderness

1. ANILCA Section 810 (a), Evaluation and Finding:

The Proposed Action will not restrict subsistence uses. No reasonably foreseeable decrease in the abundance of harvestable resources and no limitation on harvester access to subsistence species will result from the Proposed Action. Because these lands are State selected, they may no

longer fall under the Federal Subsistence Board, Federal Subsistence Regulations of ANILCA Section 810(a).

2. Endangered Species Act of 1972:
Biological evaluations have determined that there are no Federally listed threatened or endangered species that will be affected by the Proposed Action.
3. National Historic Preservation Act, as amended:
The BLM is required by the National Historic Preservation Act to locate, inventory, and nominate all cultural sites that may be directly or indirectly affected by the scheduled activities. This activity has been reviewed by a qualified archeologist and a determination made that no known archeological or cultural resources are present in the operation/landing area.
4. Floodplain Management (E.O. 11988) Protection of Wetlands:
The activities described under the Proposed Action are not located within a floodplain as defined by Executive Order (E.O.) 11988 and are not located within wetlands as defined in E.O. 11990.

B. Land Status:
Current land status consists of solid blocks of BLM administered lands and lands selected by the State of Alaska. There is no indication that the selected lands will be conveyed in the foreseeable future. Concurrence has been received by the State of Alaska for the commercial use of the selected lands.

C. Soils:
The highlands surrounding both the Anvik and Bonasila Rivers range in elevation from 500 to 2,000 feet. Soils in these areas formed in material derived from the underlying bedrock. On the upper slopes, the mantle of weathered material is commonly shallow and there are local outcrops of bedrock. Shallow ice-rich permafrost underlies most soils in the deeper residual and colluvial material of the north-facing slopes, toe slopes, and valley bottoms, but permafrost is deep or absent on south facing slopes. In places, the toe slopes and valley bottoms have a thin, silty mantle.

D. Vegetation:
Ridges and peaks over 1,000 feet have a cover of low shrubs and forbs. Lower southerly side slopes in most places support white spruce, shrubs, and, in a few places, paper birch, alder, and grasses. Toe slopes, north facing slopes, and valley bottoms support black spruce, sedges, mosses, and other water tolerant plants. Areas bordering the Bering Sea have no trees, but do support the same sequence

of vegetation. Frost scars, stone strips, solifluction lobes, and other frost features are common in those areas.

IV. ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES

A. Impacts of the Proposed Action:

1. Noise:
Noise from travel by boat or plane will be of short duration. Some camp noise will be noticeable in the immediate camp areas.
2. Soils:
Soils in the area of heavy human use will be compacted. During periods when soils are wet, there will be some disturbance to the soil surface. Heavy use areas will be exposed to a slight increase in erosion.
3. Vegetation:
Vegetation in the immediate area of the camps will be trampled from regular human use. Some trails through the vegetation will develop from continued use. Vegetation species composition will change in heavy use areas, eliminating woody species and favoring forb and grass species. Areas where fires are built will be devoid of vegetation for several years following the end of use.
4. Visual:
There will be a visual intrusion in an otherwise natural area from the camps. The intrusion will be of short duration and apparent to only a few other hunters or recreationists.
5. Wildlife:
There will be short term displacement of wildlife from the camp areas. Most species will return shortly after the camps are removed.

B. Impacts of the No Action Alternative:

1. Noise:
With no human activity, noise levels will be only those associated with natural processes.
2. Soils:
Soils will remain in their present condition with no increased compaction or erosion.
3. Vegetation:
Vegetation will continue to grow without any change in density or composition.

4. Visual:
No visual intrusion will be present.
5. Wildlife:
Wildlife will not be disrupted by human intrusions and activity.

- C Cumulative Impacts:
No residual or cumulative impacts are expected to be incurred by the implementation of the Proposed Action.

V. CONSULTATION AND COORDINATION

- A. Persons/Agencies Consulted:
State of Alaska, Department of Natural Resources
Land Status, Letter of Concurrence
- B. List of Preparers:
Jake Schlapfer, Outdoor Recreation Planner
Donna Redding, Archaeologist
Jeff Denton, Subsistence Coordinator
Dave Kelley, Natural Resource Specialist